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ABSTRACT

This document was prepared by elementary school counselors in reply to a request for professional input in determining necessary competencies for the certification of elementary school counselors in Pennsylvania. In general, it was found the consultants were in agreement in generating a program that was developmental in focus rather than crisis-oriented, or preventative, and it was hoped this guide would stimulate program evaluation and curriculum revision in college and university training programs, resulting in qualitative improvement in preparation programs. The guide is presented and color-coded in three divisions: competencies before entrance into a program, competencies before entrance into field experience, and competencies before entrance into a job as an elementary school counselor. Though prepared for Pennsylvania, the suggestions are applicable elsewhere. (PFS)

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# SUGGESTED COMPETENCIES FOR THE CERTIFICATION OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL COUNSELORS IN PENNSYLVANIA

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## INTRODUCTION

This document represents the work of elementary school counselors, counseling supervisors and counselor educators over a two-year period in Pennsylvania. It was initiated by the Pennsylvania Association of Counselor Educators and Supervisors as a result of a request by the state Department of Education for input from professionals in determining necessary competencies for the certification of elementary school counselors. A small grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Office of Higher Education, Bureau of Academic Programs, allowed several counselor educators, counselors and supervisors to move a step further in organizing the material for implementation.

1. Considering the number of persons who assisted in the evaluation of this statement, there was a commitment to the elementary school counselor generating a program that was developmental in focus, rather than crisis-oriented, or preventative. This suggested that an elementary counselor functions most of the time in ways that expand services to most children and their significant others.

2. May's (Pennsylvania Department of Education, Division of Pupil Personnel Services, 1976) findings in a recent survey of 387 Pennsylvania elementary school counselors suggested that the latter felt less competent in pupil assessment, group processes, coordination of community resources and career education. The 40 new ESEA Title III elementary counselors have specifically expressed need in group processes, program management, group techniques with parents and teachers, and information on learning disabilities.

Since most elementary counselors (May, 1976) are trying to serve over 600 children and their significant others, it is impossible to evolve a developmental program that rests on work with only individuals. Therefore, we want to stress that the order of the presentation of the competencies does not suggest how we value them in a total guidance program. If anything can be gleaned from our work to date, it is that expertise with groups of children, parents and teachers and with program development and management are essential to a developmental program that elicits and maintains community support.

This document is presented to you in the hopes that it will stimulate:

1. Program evaluation in colleges and universities.
2. Curriculum revision in colleges and universities.
3. Qualitative improvement in preparation programs in colleges and universities.

The document is presented and color-coded in three divisions: competencies before entrance into a program, competencies before entrance into field experience and competencies before entrance into a job as an elementary school counselor. Additionally, each specific competency is coded C (classroom learning), F (fieldwork learning), or C & F (classroom

and fieldwork learning) with the hope that it will stimulate the planning of learning experiences appropriate to each competency.

Work continues on the competencies in the affective domain. These are emerging as essential counselor characteristics. The committee is composed of Ruth Harvey, Philadelphia City School District; Cindy Phillips, Villanova University; and Carol Wagner, Temple University.

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## COMPETENCIES BEFORE ENTRANCE INTO A PROGRAM

### Competencies for Work with Individuals

Academic competencies:

The student will be:

*C & F Familiar with and sensitive to people from various socioeconomic, minority and ethnic backgrounds.

C & F Familiar with and sensitive to people with special problems (i.e., learning disabled, physically and emotionally handicapped).

C & F Able to describe typical and atypical behavior and development in children.

Experiential competencies:

The student will:

F Be able to work with individuals who vary in socioeconomic and ethnic background.

F Have gained knowledge of oneself as a person (i.e., by self examination and self help).

*C = Classroom learning
F = Field learning

COMPETENCIES BEFORE ENTRANCE TO FIELD EXPERIENCES

Competencies for Work with Individuals

I. A. Counseling (Individual and Group)

Academic competencies:

The student will be able:

C To demonstrate knowledge of theoretical developments and procedures and acquire a repertoire of counseling techniques.

Experiential competencies:

The student will be able:

F To utilize data from observation.

F To use play media as a means of communication (art, role playing, music, movement) with children.

I. B. Consultation-Collaboration

Academic competencies:

The student will:

C Gain knowledge in the areas of human growth and development, behavior management, assessment techniques, learning principles, individualization of instruction, grouping types of exceptionality (i.e., developmentally disabled, socially and emotionally handicapped, physically handicapped, gifted), career education, classroom management and professional literature relative to elementary school counseling and consultation-collaboration.

F Be able to demonstrate the ability to distinguish between counseling, consultation-collaboration and supervision.

Experiential competencies:

The student will be able:

F To introduce, maintain and evaluate developmental guidance programs (i.e., DUSO, TAD, Human Development Programs).

I. C. Coordination

Academic competencies:

The student will be able:

C & F To describe the functioning areas of various specialists in the school (i.e., nurse, psychologist, home and school visitor, social worker).

C & F To identify community, regional and state agencies available for school referrals and describe the range of services the agencies provide.

Experiential competencies:

The student will be able:

F To provide methods that will keep all parties informed of progress with an individual.

F To observe and participate with specialists in a special service case (i.e., case staffing).

Competencies for Work with Groups

II. A. Counseling and Guidance

Academic competencies:

The student will be able:

C To gain knowledge of theoretical development and procedures.

C To gain knowledge about models (i.e., play groups, activity groups, activity-interview groups, talking groups).

C To gain knowledge of verbal and nonverbal techniques.

C To develop familiarity with methods of assessing behavior change.

C To discuss the differences and similarities between group counseling and group guidance.

Experiential competencies:

The student will be able:

F To vary the interventions and techniques used within the group process.

II. B. Consultation-Collaboration

Academic competencies:

The student will gain knowledge in:

C 1. Human growth and development (Erickson's stages of development, Havighurst's developmental tasks, Kohlberg's stages of moral development, Piaget's stages of cognitive development).

C 2. Group dynamics (how groups function and the application of that knowledge to the classroom, to the faculty as a group, to the school as a total community).

C 3. Affective education (values clarification, DUSO, TAD, Human Development Program).

C 4. Classroom management and principles of successful management of children's behavior, knowledge of ways to encourage the development of self-discipline.

C 5. Assessment techniques (observation, sociometrics, tests and measurements, interviews).

C 6. Learning principles (positive reinforcement, motivational concepts).

C 7. Methods of grouping for instructional and social purposes within and across classrooms.

C 8. Types of exceptionality and behavioral clues for identification (i.e., developmentally disabled, socially and emotionally handicapped, physically handicapped, gifted).

C 9. Career education (philosophy, curriculum integration, commercially prepared resources, community resources).

C 10. Children's rights.

C 11. Various approaches to parenting--(P.E.T., Dreikurian, behavioral).

C 12. Models usable at the elementary school (i.e., C-group, Adlerian, theme-centered interaction).

Competencies for Implementing Additional Professional Functions

III. A. Program Development, Implementation, Management and Evaluation

Academic competencies:

The student will be able:

C To gain knowledge of the purpose and methods for assessing needs of an identified population.

C To acquire knowledge of how a needs assessment facilitates program development.

C To increase knowledge of how specific needs can be translated into specific objectives for various parts of a guidance program.

C To enlarge upon one's knowledge of the management process that consists of planning, organizing, actuating and controlling to determine and accomplish the guidance objectives at the counselor's particular school.

C To gain knowledge of research methodology that can be used to evaluate the achievement of the guidance objectives at the counselor's particular school.

C To acquire knowledge and ideas for use of current professional literature to enhance program changes and development.

F To explain a personal philosophy of guidance that underlies program development and delivery of specific services.

III. B. Functioning of the School as a Social System.

Academic competencies:

The student will be able:

C To gain knowledge about the organizational structure of the school.

C To gain knowledge about how power is delegated within a school and a school system.

C To gain knowledge about alternative methods of decision-making within a school system.

III. C. Ethics and Law

Academic competencies:

The student will be able:

C To gain knowledge of law as it applies to school and those affected by the school (i.e., students' records, due process, teacher contracts, parents' right to know, tracking, child abuse, confidentiality).

C To acquire knowledge of APGA Code of Ethics.

C To gain knowledge of current legislation that affects professional responsibilities.

III. D. Assessment and Reporting

1. Observation

Academic competencies:

The student will be able:

C To gain knowledge of timed observation.

C To develop a personalized system of observing and coding classroom behavior.

2. Sociometric

Academic competencies:

The student will be able:

C To gain knowledge of various sociometric techniques that can be used for analysis of individual and group social needs.

3. Tests and Mesurements

Academic competencies:

The student will be able:

C To gain knowledge and understanding of group standardized achievement tests, mental ability tests, readiness tests, diagnostic tests and screening tests.

C To identify major resources in the area of tests and measurement (i.e., manuals, Buros Mental Measurement Yearbook).

C To gain knowledge and understanding of statistics related to standardized testing.

III. E. Professionalism

Academic competencies:

The student will:

C Acquire an awareness of the various professional organizations to which a counselor might belong (i.e., APGA, PPGA, PSCA, APA).

Experiential competencies:

The student will:

F Attend a local, state (i.e., PPGA, PSCA) or national (i.e., APGA) conference during the course of his/her graduate program.

COMPETENCIES BEFORE ENTRANCE TO THE JOB

Competencies for Work with Individuals

I. A. Counseling

Academic competencies:

The student will be able:

C To develop familiarity with methods for assessing behavior change.

F To synthesize one's personalized model from existing orientations.

Experiential competencies:

The student will be able:

F To provide counseling to children and adults.

F To determine if behavior change has occurred in the client.

F To develop methods that encourage self-referral and teacher and parent referrals of students.

C & F To determine when individual counseling is the intervention of choice and demonstrate the ability to generate alternatives if it is not the intervention of choice.

C & F To vary and apply different techniques that suit a particular problem, and/or type of client, but remain genuine to one's own personality.

F To critique on a continuous basis one's own counseling behavior.

F To gain knowledge of oneself as a counselor (i.e., an awareness of professional strengths and weaknesses).

I. B. Consultation-Collaboration

The student will:

C Gain knowledge in the areas of human growth and development, behavior management, assessment techniques, learning principles, individualization of instruction, grouping, types of exceptionality (i.e., developmentally disabled, socially and emotionally handicapped, physically handicapped, gifted), career education, classroom management and professional literature relative to elementary school counseling and consultation-collaboration.

Academic competencies:

The student will be able:

C & F To describe various models appropriate at the elementary school level.

C To discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the various models.

C To discuss methods for assessing consultee and third party behavior change.

F To synthesize one's personalized model from existing theoretical orientations.

Experiential competencies:

The student will be able:

C & F To identify and carry out a procedure for consultation-collaboration with individual teachers, parents and administrators.

F To vary the approach to meet the needs of the consultee.

F To assess behavior change.

I. C. Coordination

Academic competencies:

The student will be able:

C & F To identify resources within the school district for meeting the emotional, perceptual-motor, social, intellectual and physical needs of children.

C & F To identify community, regional and state agencies available for school referrals and describe the range of the service the agencies provide.

Experiential competencies:

The student will be able:

F To identify and coordinate the referral to an outside agency or additional services within the school district.

F To coordinate the services of school and community personnel to help a child or group of children.

Competencies for Work with Groups

II. A. Counseling and Guidance

Academic competencies:

The student will be able:

C & F To become familiar with and sensitive to types of exceptionality.

F To develop a personalized model.

Experiential competencies:

F To counsel groups of children.

F To vary the group counseling model and guidance activities dependent upon age, purpose, population characteristics, problem areas, socioeconomic and ethnic background of group members.

F To develop and implement various orientation programs (new students, new teachers, beginning kindergarteners, beginning junior high or middle school students).

C To create activities and materials that can be used to help children accomplish various developmental tasks.

F To assess behavior change.

C To develop methods to encourage student, teacher and parent referrals.

F To determine when group counseling is the intervention of choice and to generate alternatives when it is not the intervention of choice.

F To critique on a continuous basis one's own behavior in counseling a group.

II. B. Consultation-Collaboration

Academic competencies:

The student will be able:

C To vary skills and strategies for different groups.

C To gain knowledge of methods for assessing consultee behavior change.

F To synthesize one's personalized model from existing theoretical orientations.

Experiential competencies:

The student will be able:

F To identify a consultant's request emanating from a group of children, parents and/or teachers.

F To develop and carry out a procedure for groups of teachers, parents and administrators.

C & F To use skills with the following groups:

1. In-service work with teachers and administrators (i.e., train teachers in the use of affective materials).

2. Leadership of parent groups.

3. Pre-service work in training paraprofessionals (e.g., peer helpers, parent helpers).

4. Leadership in community groups that function to serve children's needs.

Such skills might focus on content related to normal growth and development, group dynamics, affective education, individualization of instruction, grouping types of classroom management, aspects of play and curriculum development.

F To aid in identification, placement and follow-up of children and parents for special group programs (i.e., federally funded programs, community summer camps).

F To assess behavior change.

Competencies for Implementing Additional Professional Functions

III. A. Program Development, Implementation, Management and Evaluation

Academic competencies:

C To increase knowledge of how specific needs can be translated into specific objectives for various parts of a guidance program.

C To enlarge upon one's knowledge of the management process that consists of planning, organizing, actuating and controlling to determine and accomplish the guidance objectives at the counselor's particular school.

Experiential competencies:

The student will be able:

F To work with the counseling supervisor, the director of pupil personnel services and the school principal to generate input for guidance program development at the district level and in individual schools.

F To conduct a needs assessment that includes the children, parents, teachers and principal of an identified population.

C & F To design a comprehensive guidance program based on the needs assessment of an identified population.

F To adapt the district guidance program objectives to the needs of the counselor's school.

F To assess the achievement of guidance objectives at the counselor's school and to utilize the knowledge gained for program change and development.

F To interpret the role and function of the counselor and the guidance program to children, staff, parents and community.

F To develop a public relations presentation about the guidance program for children and adults.

III. B. Functioning of the School as a Social System

Academic competencies:

The student will be able:

F To gain knowledge of the community in which the counselor is working (i.e., attitudes, values, beliefs).

F To identify the school board members and the methods of selection.

C & F To determine the line and staff responsibilities of all administrators.

Experiential competencies:

The student will be able:

F To function as a liaison person who can bring the views and feelings of parents, teachers and children to the attention of the principal, as well as interpret the principal's policies to parents, teachers and children.

F To help teachers, parents and children learn ways to affect administrative decisions that influence their lives.

F To identify and use the power structure of the school for positive program development.

F To describe and use the decision-making methods within the school district for program development.

F To assess social and emotional climates and recommend changes in the classroom and the school to teachers and principals.

F To recognize and assess the power of influence the counselor has within the system and how it can be used within the school, the school district and the community.

F To attend a school board meeting.

F To attend a PTA or PTO meeting.

III. C. Ethics and Law

Experiential competencies:

The student will be able:

F To interpret and apply current regulations regarding individual rights under the law (i.e., confidentiality, due process).

F To apply the APGA Code of Ethics.

F To develop an appropriate system for school record keeping.

III. D. Assessment and Reporting

1. Observation

Experiential competencies:

The student will be able:

F To observe behaviors related to a child, teacher or school problem.

F To discriminate between behavioral description and interpretations of behavior.

F To use timed observations.

F To use anecdotal records.

2. Sociometrics

Experiential competencies:

The student will be able:

F To select, use and interpret appropriate sociometric techniques.

3. Tests and Measurements

Experiential competencies:

The student will be able:

F To serve as a consultant in the development of a school testing program.

F To read and interpret test scores from instruments used at the elementary school level.

F To communicate test scores to children, parents, teachers and administrators in a meaningful and constructive way.

F To use test scores in planning for more effective learning experiences for a child or a group of children (i.e., determining instructional level).

F To explain strengths and limitations of testing and test scores, specifically as a basis for decision-making about a child (i.e., special placement, individualizing instruction).

4. Report Writing

Experiential competencies:

The student will:

F Integrate assessment data (i.e., from observation, sociometrics, testing results, conferences with child, school staff and parents) into a comprehensive written report that includes:

a. Description of the data (fact).

b. Interpretation of the data (assumptions, hypotheses).

c. Recommendations for school and home based on data and the interpretations.

d. Plan for follow-up to check on implementation of recommendations, revision and reassessment of progress.